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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 000051

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: TBILISI ELECTIONS UPDATE 01/14/2008

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Early January 13, the Central Election Commission (CEC) announced final results of Georgia's Presidential election. Mikheil Saakashvili won 53.4 percent of the votes. Levan Gachechiladze had 25.67 percent. The CEC denied nearly all of the election complaints filed by the opposition and GYLA as "groundless or procedurally incorrect." The results of 8 precincts have been annulled. Approximately 30,000 Tbilisians protested peacefully against the election results and CEC on the afternoon of January 13. Themes of anti-Americanism and direct criticism of DAS Bryza, based on a distorted television report of Bryza's remarks, were voiced before the crowd. Acting President Burjanadze told Ambassador Tefft and ODIHR representatives on January 14 that the GOG plans to create a taskforce to address this election's shortcomings. She said Parliamentary elections will take place between April 10 and the end of May. On January 14, opposition leaders Kakha Kukava, Salome Zourabichvili, and Koba Davitashvili told the Ambassador that they will continue their appeal of complaints to the courts. Finally, newspapers are speculating about Mikheil Saakashvili's new cabinet members after he resumes office. End Summary.

CEC Announces Final Results, Denies Complaints

12. (U) Early January 13, the Central Election Commission (CEC) announced final results of Georgia's Presidential election. Mikheil Saakashvili won 53.4 percent of the votes. Levan Gachechiladze had 25.67 percent.

13. (C) The CEC denied nearly all of the election complaints filed by either the opposition or Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) as "groundless or procedurally incorrect." Government watchdog GYLA's chairman, Giorgi Chkheidze, told poloff that his organization filed approximately 230 formal complaints at the District Election Commission level. Only one complaint, in Kutaisi, was considered on its merit. GYLA appealed the 30 most serious remaining complaints to the CEC.

14. (C) In response to these complaints, the CEC delivered 2-line statements denying them as "groundless" or "procedurally incorrect." The CEC said that "those filing complaints should know how to do so properly." GYLA asked the CEC to at least acknowledge their information regarding election violations and look into them itself. The CEC refused to accept any of GYLA's information regarding election violations. The CEC denied GYLA's complaints on a party-line vote of 7 to 6.

15. (C) GYLA's sole remaining option was to appeal to the courts. Of their multiple complaints, the courts dismissed all except one, again due to "procedural errors." One final complaint remained before Tbilisi City Court on January 13.

However, the CEC still finalized the election results.

Opposition Protests, America Takes Heat

¶16. (C) In response to the CEC's refusal to review their complaints regarding election violations, the United National Council of Opposition called for renewed street protests on January 13 at 3:00 p.m. Approximately 30,000 Tbilisians filled the former Republican Square. (Note: Embassy estimates varied significantly. Most observers estimate at least 30,000 people. The crowd included many women, and tended to be slightly older. End note.) Several speakers directly criticized DAS Bryza for "approving the elections" early. This was apparently based on a distorted report on Rustavi television of DAS Bryza's standard reiteration of U.S. policy. Two posters were observed with Bryza's picture and slogans saying "No to Bryza's Democracy." One unidentified speaker also spoke at length against "Americans supporting Saakashvili rather than democracy in Georgia."

Burjanadze Meets Diplomatic Corps

¶17. (SBU) Acting President Burjanadze told members of the diplomatic corps on January 14 that the GOG plans to create a taskforce to address this election's shortcomings. This was a direct result of the Embassy's and ODIHR's criticisms of problems in the presidential election's administration, vote counting, and complaint processes. She said Parliamentary elections will take place between April 10 and the end of May. The taskforce will focus on: 1) fixing the observed problems before the next election, 2) fixing and strengthening the CEC, 3) fixing and strengthening the

TBILISI 00000051 002 OF 002

media's independence and responsibility, and 4) training Precinct Election Commission officials.

Opposition Meets Ambassador, Vows to Continue Protests

¶18. (C) UNC leaders MP Kakha Kukava, Salome Zourabichvili, and Koba Davitashvili met the Ambassador on January 14. They advised him that they will continue their appeal of complaints in the courts. They plan to also continue their peaceful street protests, including over the coming weekend while the inauguration ceremony is planned. The Ambassador advised them that President Bush has called Saakashvili and congratulated him as the winner of the election. The Ambassador also confirmed that DAS Bryza will meet the opposition on January 18. He strongly suggested that the opposition look ahead to parliamentary elections and strategize toward that now.

Saakashvili to Re-shuffle Cabinet Again?

¶19. (U) Newspapers were rife with speculation about Saakashvili's new cabinet once he resumes office as President. Some reports suggest that David Bakradze will become Foreign Minister, with MP Giga Bokeria joining him as his deputy. The same reports suggested current Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili could become Chairman of the National Security Council.

TEFFT